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ABSTRACT

The 1987 Summer Leadership Program was a new initiative of the Division of High Schools for all incoming high school students and their parents. In essence, the program served as an orientation to high school. Most schools organized 12 hours of activities, spread over a period of 2 to 4 days. The program was implemented at 108 New York City high schools, and schools were encouraged to develop programs tailored to their own specializations as well as to the needs and interests of incoming students. Visits by Office of Educational Assessment staff to 11 program sites indicated that Summer Leadership Program activities appeared to be successful and relevant to students' and parents' concerns. Analyses of participants' responses to questionnaires regarding the program indicated that the sessions provided a comprehensive overview of most school components. This document presents an evaluation of the Summer Leadership Program. Chapter I, Introduction, discusses the program background, evaluation objectives, program evaluation, and the scope of this report. Chapter II, Program Implementation, examine various aspects of the program, including the program structure, student participation level, parent participation, and program staff. Program activities are described and analyzed in chapter III. Chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations. (NB)

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THE SUMMER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
1987

OEA Evaluation Report

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Evaluation Section Report
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July, 1988

THE SUMMER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
1987

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Summary

The 1987 Summer Leadership Program (S.L.P.) was a new initiative of the Division of High Schools for all incoming high school students and their parents. In essence, the program served as an orientation to high school. Most schools organized 12 hours of activities, spread over a period of two to four days. The program was implemented at 108 of the city high schools, and schools were encouraged to develop programs tailored to their own specializations as well as the needs and interests of incoming students. Visits by Office of Educational Assessment (O.E.A.) staff to 11 program sites indicated that S.L.P. activities appeared to be successful and relevant to students' and parents' concerns. Analyses of participants' responses to questionnaires regarding the program indicated that the sessions provided a comprehensive overview of most school components.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Summer Leadership Program emphasized making new students aware of information and resources needed to start the school year smoothly. Program activities included hands-on experiences related to school strengths; language arts activities designed to generate enthusiasm for reading and writing; opportunities to become acquainted with the full range of school programs and special features; and sessions where students would have the opportunity to become familiar with the school's guidance services, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and supportive services.

PROGRAM GOALS

The program's stated objectives were to ease students' transition from middle school to high school, to motivate students to succeed by providing activities designed to engender positive attitudes toward school, and to develop in students a sense of identification with the high school community and staff.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The S.L.P. met its primary goal of easing students' transition to high school by providing a broad range of activities that served to acquaint students with school activities. Thus, school-based planning and implementation of the program proved successful. Students and parents alike were generally positive about the program. O.E.A. site visits indicated that sessions on guidance services, extra-curricular activities, language arts, and general information dissemination all contributed to meeting the program's overall goals.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following specific recommendations are made:

- Continue the S.L.P. prior to the 1988-89 school year, especially those components that review graduation requirements, special school programs, and career awareness.

- Offer at least one special evening orientation session at each school so working parents can participate in the program.

- Encourage schools to modify those aspects of the S.L.P. that proved difficult to implement and to expand on those that were successful.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Summer Leadership Program (S.L.P.) is a new initiative of the Division of High Schools (D.H.S.) intended for all incoming high school students. The program, mandated under High School Memorandum #101, was implemented in summer, 1987. According to this memorandum all incoming high school students were to participate in an orientation program during the first week of September. The program was to last for 12 hours, spread over a period of two to four days. Parents of incoming students were also encouraged to participate in the program. In addition to incoming students, the program included older students who served as mentors for program participants. Funding for the program was provided by D.H.S. Each school received a base amount of $2,300 with an additional allocation of seven dollars per student. Faculty and staff who participated in the program were compensated in accordance with the Board of Education's contractual rate for per-session activities.

The program was implemented at 108 of the city high schools between August 30th and September 4th 1987. Schools were encouraged to develop their own programs based on their specialization and the needs and interests of incoming students. High School Memorandum #101 also required that schools provide some activities whose features were common to all programs. These activities were designed to fulfill the primary S.L.P. goals.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The overall goals of the S.L.P. were to enable new students to begin the school year with the sense of belonging, and to make them aware of information and resources needed to start the term smoothly. The program's primary objectives were to:

- ease students' transition from middle school to high school;
- motivate students to succeed by providing activities designed to engender positive attitudes toward the school; and
- develop in students a sense of identification with the high school community and staff.

Program guidelines recommended four activities to meet these objectives, noting that each school should take into consideration its specializations and interests. These activities included hands-on experiences related to school strengths, language arts activities designed to generate enthusiasm for reading and writing, opportunities to become acquainted with the full range of school programs and special features, and sessions where students would have the opportunity to become familiar with the school's guidance services, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and supportive services.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Office of Educational Assessment (O.E.A.) collected both qualitative and quantitative data on the implementation of the S.L.P., its effectiveness as perceived by the various groups who

participated in the program, and such specific aspects of the program as types of activities provided, and level of participation by students, parents, staff, and student mentors.

O.E.A. evaluators visited a representative sample of high schools to observe program process and implementation. The evaluation team selected 11 sites based on school type (academic-comprehensive, vocational-technical, and alternative), borough, size of the incoming class, and percentage of incoming students whose first language was not English. The following schools were selected for site visits: DeWitt Clinton, Bronx High School of Science, John F. Kennedy, and Theodore Roosevelt in the Bronx; Automotive and George Wingate in Brooklyn; Aviation and Benjamin Cardozo in Queens; Chelsea and High School for the Humanities in Manhattan; and Curtis High School on Staten Island.

An evaluator spent one day at each sample site observing program structure and activities, and interviewing key personnel and students. Interviews with program participants focused on their perceptions of program effectiveness, program strengths and weaknesses, and their recommendations for changes or modifications in the program. Evaluators also collected and reviewed relevant documents about each school's program. O.E.A. obtained quantitative data from questionnaires that were administered to all participants (students, student mentors, parents, faculty, and staff). Participants completed the questionnaires at the end of their respective programs. Separate questionnaires were developed for each group. These

questionnaires consisted of 15 to 20 items designed to measure participants' satisfaction with various program activities and the extent to which they perceived that these activities fulfilled program objectives.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report is organized into four chapters. A description of program structure and implementation is contained in Chapter II. Program activities are described and analyzed in Chapter III. Conclusions and recommendations for future program modifications are included in the final chapter.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The Summer Leadership Program (S.L.P.) operated in 108 of the city high schools between August 31st and September 4th, 1987. Schools organized programs that provided a variety of activities designed to orient incoming students and their parents to school-based academic programs, extra-curricular activities, and special services. School administrators and teachers were assisted by student mentors in conducting each school's S.L.P. activities. Students and their parents were informed of S.L.P. activities by individual mailings and, in several cases, telephone calls.

Eighty-seven schools returned complete information about program structure and attendance to O.E.A. There were certain similarities among schools in terms of program length and the content of sessions. The majority of schools that completed attendance forms (56 percent) conducted three-day programs. Twenty-one schools (24 percent) conducted two-day programs; 13 schools (15 percent) conducted four-day programs. In addition, two schools (two percent) organized five-day programs, two schools held one-day programs, and one school (Bronx Regional) held an overnight program.

Program guidelines contained in Memorandum #101 had mandated a total of 12 program hours for each school. The way in which

hours were to be allocated was not specified, however, permitting staff at individual schools to devise their own activities. For instance, at the 11 sample schools, eight operated three-day programs, but organized hours differently. At Wingate, two days were organized around four and one-half hour sessions for incoming ninth and tenth graders. The third day was reserved for parents, and an additional three-hour evening session for parents was also held. At Chelsea, the 12 hours dedicated to S.L.P. activities were divided differently. Incoming ninth graders and their parents were allocated eight hours, spread over two days; a four-hour session was then held for tenth graders on the third day. Parents accompanied their children during the sessions.

At two of the sample sites, T. Roosevelt and Curtis, five-day programs were scheduled. They were among the seven schools that conducted programs of that length. Curtis offered a three-hour evening session to parents and students on the first day. The session was social and included dinner for parents and students, a large group orientation session, and a tour of the school. This session was not included in the school's calculation of its mandated 12 hours of S.L.P. activities, which consisted of three-hour sessions held over four days. At Theodore Roosevelt, three-hour sessions were held over five days, thus exceeding the mandated 12 hours.

At DeWitt Clinton--one of the 22 high schools that conducted four-day programs--students attended three-hour

sessions held on four consecutive days. Finally, two schools which conducted two-day programs organized six-hour sessions on each day.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Information made available by the Division of High Schools indicated that 108 schools conducted S.L.P. activities. Slightly more than 60,000 incoming students were expected to enroll in these schools during 1987-88.*

Student participation data were provided by 87 schools in aggregate form. These data indicate that 21,519 students took part in S.L.P. activities on the first day of the program. The reported number of students participating at each school ranged from 19 to 1,200; the median was 176. Attendance for other days was lower and is not reported here because these figures contain some duplicates.

Of the students staff listed as participating in the S.L.P., 98 percent were incoming ninth and tenth graders. The remaining participants were identified as special education students and incoming eleventh and twelfth graders.

O.E.A. received 20,164 completed student surveys from 99

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*This figure is based on the total number of students who left N.Y.C. junior high schools in spring, 1987 and were "list noticed" to enter specific high schools in fall, 1987. However, some of these students enroll in private high schools and others move out of the city. Thus, it is difficult to determine the exact number of students eligible for the program.

schools. Of these students 29 percent attended the program one day, 31 percent attended two days, 30 percent attended three days, seven percent attended four days, and two percent attended five days. Of the students who did not attend everyday, 28 percent said something came up at home that prevented them from attending, 21 percent had other plans, and 17 percent said they were either not getting anything out of the program or found it boring. The number of students completing surveys was quite similar to the aggregate number reported by school staff on the first day of the program.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Seventy of the 87 participating schools provided information on parent participation. A total of 7,560 parents were reported to have participated in S.L.P. activities.* Level of parent participation was dependent on size of school's incoming class. Nonetheless, even taking this into consideration there was a great deal of variability in parent response to the S.L.P., some of which can be attributed to the lack of evening orientation sessions for parents at some schools.

Among schools selected for site visits, High School for the Humanities reported that 18 parents participated in the program, as compared to 490 students that were expected to enroll at the school. This represents a ratio of 26 students to every parent

*As with students, it was not possible to determine how many parents attended more than one S.L.P. session. However, 2,610 completed parent surveys were returned to O.E.A.

that attended. At George Wingate High School, 555 new enrollees were expected and 134 parents attended S.L.P. activities at least once, representing a ratio of four to one. The lowest turnout reported was at John F. Kennedy, where 1,175 new enrollees were expected and only four parents were reported to have attended S.L.P activities.

Nearly two-thirds of the parents who completed O.E.A. surveys had previously been to their child's school. Just under 80 percent had been informed about the S.L.P. from the letter mailed to their houses, 16 percent said their child told them about the program, four percent said someone from the school telephoned them at home, and seven percent found out about the program from other sources. Parents were also asked the reasons they decided to attend the S.L.P. Three-fourths of the parents said they were interested in knowing what their child is doing in school, 30 percent said they attended because school staff asked them to attend, and 22 percent said their child asked them to attend the program.

Parents appeared generally satisfied with the S.L.P.; two-thirds said they believed they received sufficient information about the school, and 80 percent believed their child would discuss his or her problems with school staff in the event that this should be necessary. Staff members were also positive about parental involvement: 85 percent believed having parents involved in the S.L.P. was important in the program's success.

PROGRAM STAFF

The 1987 S.L.P. program at each school was overseen by an assistant principal who was assisted by teachers, guidance counselors, and student mentors. Preparation and planning began during the spring, 1987 term, and program guidelines encouraged the active participation of a variety of school staff in the process.

Assistant Principals

Assistant principals (A.P.s) were primarily charged with coordinating and supervising S.L.P. activities at each school. Of the 150 A.P.s completing O.E.A. surveys, 59 percent (89) reported having a great deal of input in planning S.L.P. activities, 31 percent (47) had some input in planning, and nine percent (14) said they had no input in planning.

At the sample schools, A.P.s and principals often served as moderators for daily events, formally welcoming students and parents, explaining the program's purpose, outlining daily activities, and introducing staff. At the three vocational-technical schools selected for site visits, Automotive, Chelsea, and Aviation, administrators emphasized special programs (shop facilities and part-time jobs) available to students. In addition, they emphasized the extra demands made on students, namely Regents examinations, vocational specialization requirements, and heavy course loads. In the words of the principal at Automotive: "It is not easy. We demand a lot and

we expect a lot. You'll learn what Automotive is about." Administrators at other schools echoed these remarks and also pointed out that students who graduate have better job prospects and career opportunities. In sum, A.P.s generally set the tone for S.L.P. activities and conveyed the sense that students were welcome at the school.

Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors and Assistant Principals of Guidance were responsible for providing an overview of support services available at schools. Just under 80 percent of the 96 counselors who completed surveys reported having some input in planning S.L.P. activities. A wide variety of activities were conducted at sample sites to inform students about counseling services. At large schools, guidance staff often provided an overview of the school's counseling services, office locations, and related information to large groups of students. These presentations were either followed-up during the S.L.P. with specific small-group activities or during the first week of classes.

At the smaller sites visited, counselors made presentations to small groups of students--sessions which tended to discuss more specific aspects of school services, i.e., the substance abuse prevention program (SPARK) counseling program, and so forth. In general, the guidance sessions observed by evaluators imparted information useful to students. However, in light of the fact that not all students attended S.L.P. activities, it

would be prudent to follow-up these sessions with visits to individual classes once the school year begins to insure that students are aware of these services.

Student Mentors

Student mentors assisted school staff in a variety of tasks. Of the 735 mentors who completed surveys, just under 30 percent had previously been mentors before participating in the S.L.P. Approximately 70 percent of the mentors said they most often talked to students, 20 percent helped teachers, and five percent were discussants in workshops for students and parents.

At the 11 sample sites O.E.A. evaluators visited, an average of four mentors completed surveys. Just over one-half of the mentors at the sample schools were male, compared with 32 percent at the other schools. The average age of mentors at the sample schools was 16 years (S.D. = 0.6).

Student mentors had a highly visible role in the 1987 S.L.P. program. Nearly two-thirds of the staff members said talking with student mentors was very helpful for new students and approximately 25 percent believed mentors were somewhat helpful. Eighty percent of the mentors said they talked to students about school, just under 70 percent said they discussed students' problems adapting to a high school environment, and two-thirds said they shared other school experiences. Mentors also reported discussing teachers and other school staff (50 percent), sports (44 percent) as well as answering students'

questions (40 percent). In essence, student mentors provided students with firsthand knowledge of their own experiences when they began high school.

Mentors, who had not previously participated in a similar program, rated the program highly. Eighty-four percent said they would have liked to have participated in such a program when they first entered high school. When asked what they believed the best part of the program was for new students, mentors most frequently indicated receiving information about school and requirements (43 percent); this was followed by seeing the new school (20 percent), meeting their classmates, and talking with student mentors (15 percent each).

During site visits several salient points emerged that relate to mentors' roles in the 1987 S.L.P. program. For example, at Aviation High School mentors were given the task of taking groups of as many as 75 students and parents on a building tour. The size of the group precluded hearing the mentor's comments and various parents left the group when several students disregarded mentors' requests to pay attention. School staff acknowledged this problem, and noted it was difficult to remedy given the low number of staff available to assist with the program. In general, other sample sites used mentors in situations where they had less responsibility for large groups.

Teachers

Assistant principals and S.L.P. coordinators solicited the advice and assistance of school staff to plan and implement the

program. An average of nine teachers completed an O.E.A.-prepared survey at the 80 schools that returned forms. Twenty-five percent of these teachers reported having a great deal of input in planning the S.L.P. and 50 percent reported having some input; the remaining 25 percent said they had no input in program planning.

At sample sites O.E.A. evaluators visited, teachers were involved in a variety of activities, namely directing workshops for students and their parents that discussed course offerings, interacting informally with students, and helping to coordinate program activities. For instance, at vocational-technical schools teachers directed hands-on activities that introduced students to facilities such as shops, vocational equipment, and computers. At academic-comprehensive schools teachers directed language arts sessions, discussed curricula, and spoke about special programs and activities. The goal of these sessions was to help students become familiar with school staff, and to learn about the school in such a way that they would feel comfortable once classes began.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

This chapter discusses four primary S.L.P. components implemented at the 11 sample schools evaluators visited. These components include: information dissemination about school programs and special facilities; language arts activities; hands-on experiences related to a school's specialization; and guidance and counseling activities. In light of the program's broad goals related to easing incoming students' transition to high school, these activities were organized in different ways at participating schools.

Information Dissemination About School Programs and Facilities

This S.L.P. component sought to inform students about school programs, extra-curricular activities, and the school building in general. Accordingly, a prominent activity was a tour of the school itself. Ideally, the tour served to help students make their way around the building during the first week of school by pointing out administrative offices, the cafeteria, recreational and shop facilities, and classrooms. Slightly more than 80 percent of staff at sample sites and other schools rated the building tour as very helpful to incoming students, and the remaining staff said it was somewhat helpful. Although students were not as positive as staff, 44 percent rated the tour as very

helpful and an additional 40 percent rated it as somewhat helpful. Parents were slightly less positive, with 33 percent stating they learned very much about the school on the tour and 26 percent stating they learned something about it.

O.E.A. evaluators had the opportunity to join incoming students and their parents on tours at several sites. At Wingate, a teacher led the tour, pointing out various laboratories, offices, and so forth; at the end of the tour, students were photographed for identification cards. At Automotive, two teachers accompanied groups of 25 to 30 students on the tour, which stopped at different classrooms where students participated in hands-on activities. A similar approach was used at Chelsea (also a vocational-technical school) although student mentors led groups of students. This approach worked well because it provided students with more in-depth knowledge of school facilities. It contrasted with the approach taken at Aviation, where mentors led groups with as many as 75 students and parents through the school; as noted previously, mentors had difficulty keeping such large groups together.

Staff provided information about extra-curricular activities and school programs during tours and also in classroom settings. For instance, members of a school's coaching staff would visit a group of students to encourage participation in class sports and school teams. In some cases, mentors active in athletics also encouraged ninth and tenth graders to become involved in sports.

Other school-related activities discussed included drama

clubs, special academic and honors programs, part-time jobs and internships for students in the upper grades, and student government. At High School for the Humanities, a guidance counselor urged students to use these types of programs as a way of expanding their circle of friends. She also mentioned the school's disciplinary program that uses student judges to assist with disciplinary hearings. On the day DeWitt Clinton was visited, staff were observed discussing the school's special programs, namely health careers, a premedical and animal care program, computer training, and bilingual education. At Bronx Science, parents attending the S.L.P. expressed interest in honors classes and similar programs that would enhance their child's chances of being accepted by the college of their choice.

Finally, school staff also spoke highly of the quality of their schools. At three vocational-technical schools visited, Aviation, Automotive, and Chelsea, students were reminded that they were fortunate to learn a trade while earning a high school diploma. At Bronx Science, staff spoke of the school's high academic standards and the demands placed on students. Staff at Cardozo made similar remarks, noting that a very high percentage of the school's graduates attend college.

Students rated sessions devoted to discussing rules and regulations highly; the majority (53 percent) found them very helpful and most of the others responding (40 percent) found them somewhat helpful. The sessions that discussed diploma requirements were rated as very helpful by 44 percent of the

students and as somewhat helpful by 35 percent, virtually identical to what parents said.

When students were asked to choose the best part of the S.L.P., the most frequently checked item was getting information about school and diploma requirements (36 percent), which was followed by seeing the new school (28 percent). Three-fifths of the parents said they learned very much about school rules and regulations, and 28 percent they learned something about this topic.

Language Arts Activities

Program guidelines mandated language arts activities to generate student enthusiasm for reading and writing. In light of the program's short length, these activities were generally carried out in several modified classes. At schools where students attended only one or two days, this aspect of the program was often not included.

At sample sites several different activities were observed. One of the most innovative was at the High School for the Humanities, where students were asked to write an essay on the topic "what I want" as part of a session on the school's career exploration option which is open to eleventh graders. The school also has an executive internship program open to twelfth graders. The teacher then collected students' work and read several students' essays aloud, commenting on the importance of career choices and the need to strike a balance between personal needs

and making "positive contribution to society." The evaluator noted that students responded well to her presentation.

At DeWitt Clinton, students wrote about what they expected from high school. A similar activity was organized at Aviation, where students were given notebooks and paper, and asked to write five or six sentences about how they felt on their first day in high school. The exercise was described by one of the school's English teachers as a way to record their thoughts and to have something to look back on in 10 or 15 years.

The language arts activities at Curtis had a slightly different emphasis. In one class, students worked with a computer software package that contained a short story missing key words. This exercise promoted familiarity with personal computers and creative writing. Another session at Curtis focused on taking class notes, making report outlines, and writing papers. The evaluator noted that students in the class were not responsive to the lesson content, perhaps because it too closely resembled a regular school session.

Two other sites that were visited used different activities to promote language arts. Staff at Cardozo presented a lesson on law and the criminal personality, and asked students to write an essay related to that theme. At John F. Kennedy, students designed a T-shirt and logo which they then explained to the rest of the class.

Guidance and Counseling Activities

Guidance and counseling activities were organized to familiarize students with support services and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Counselors at several sample schools (Automotive, Aviation, Chelsea, Bronx Science) distributed guides that included a variety of information, i.e., a calendar that listed holidays and vacations, school office telephone numbers, and names and office locations of key staff. Staff at several schools also prepared a list of common questions parents and students ask along with the names of appropriate personnel to whom questions should be addressed. The questions included topics such as bus and train passes, joining an athletic team, college information, attendance or lateness, working papers, and personal problems.

Other activities observed at sample schools directly addressed students' transition to high school. For instance, at Benjamin Cardozo a workshop on "freshman fears" was organized that addressed issues such as motivation, transition, and development. In essence, students were told that doubt and confusion were normal feelings among students entering high school, and that those feelings can be overcome by setting reasonable goals, budgeting time wisely, and taking advantage of support services.

Other schools used different activities to inform students about guidance services. At the High School for the Humanities,

staff stressed the importance of positive peer relationships as a source of support in academic endeavors. Other information was presented that explained the structure of the student government and the responsibilities of student leaders in the school. The head of guidance services at Chelsea met with small groups of students and parents in the school library. She gave students an attractive folder that contained diploma requirements, a time schedule, a building directory, attendance policies, and related information. In addition, the counselor provided an overview of athletic activities and college preparatory classes at the school.

In the session devoted to counseling services presented at Automotive, students were given information about general services and the SPARK program. The SPARK counselor strongly emphasized the deleterious effects of substance abuse on school performance, attendance, and related activities. The counselor also stressed that he is available to students with these problems or those who come from homes where family members have such problems.

Staff at Bronx Science encouraged students to seek out assistance because the counselor-to-student ratio precluded seeing each student individually, an observation made by staff at other schools. At Curtis, the evaluator visited a guidance session the third day of the S.L.P., during which students worked with their grade adviser to resolve problems with their program cards.

Students were generally positive about the sessions in which guidance and counseling services were discussed: 50 percent found them "very helpful" and 40 percent believed they were "somewhat helpful." Sessions dedicated to discussing study skills were rated as very helpful by 34 percent of the students and as somewhat helpful by 42 percent. Fifty-five percent of the parents believed the guidance sessions provided a lot of information and an additional 30 percent stated they received some information.

Perhaps the best indication of the success of S.L.P. counseling activities was that just under 60 percent of the students completing surveys indicated they would talk with counselors if they had a problem; students also reported that they would talk with teachers (43 percent), principals (29 percent), student mentors (21 percent), and assistant principals (18 percent) respectively.

Hands-On Activities

Another S.L.P. feature organized at participating schools was hands-on activities designed to familiarize students with the school's specializations. In most cases, these activities centered around shop facilities or computers.

Hands-on activities were observed at five sample sites. (At other sites these activities had taken place on another day.) Not surprisingly, vocational-technical schools made this aspect of S.L.P. activities a prominent part of their program. At

Automotive, students spent 30 minutes each in an auto body and an auto mechanics class. Both sessions were organized around objectives written on the board, and included discussions of part-time jobs open to students, post-high school employment opportunities, and an overview of skills students will learn in these classes. Students were also given the chance to use a computer diagnostic tool on engines and to try their hand at spray painting.

Similar activities were conducted at Chelsea, where students used a menu-driven I.B.M.-P.C. program to introduce students to computer skills. Another class was held in an electrical shop, which related to the school's strength in training students for careers repairing electronic equipment or more complex tasks such as wiring commercial or residential units. This session was led by two of the school's senior teachers, who provided a comprehensive overview of classes, their expectations, job prospects upon graduation, and college to parents and students. To demonstrate the principles discussed, the teachers passed around a circuit board from a video-cassette recorder (V.C.R.) and pointed out key components.

Hands-on activities at academic-comprehensive high schools had a slightly different approach. At Cardozo, students visited a science classroom where they were introduced to microscopes and biology; in a math class students used a computer to make LOGO-based programs. Staff at Wingate organized a session in the wood shop for new students, discussing safety, production

arrangements, and fall course requirements. A similar session was organized at Curtis.

Although the surveys did not specifically address this aspect of the S.L.P., information gathered during site visits indicated that hands-on activities were generally well received by students and parents. However, at several schools students appeared bored by long sessions that were not particularly well organized. Thus, staff may want to organize several short sessions rather than long ones in the interest of retaining students' attention over the course of a two or three-day program.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The S.L.P. met its primary goal of easing students' transition to high school by providing a broad range of activities that served to engender positive attitudes toward the schools. Thus, school-based planning and implementation of the program proved successful. Nearly one-half of the S.L.P. students who completed surveys said they were very happy about enrolling in their school and 45 percent reported they were somewhat happy at the school. Two-thirds of the parents responding to surveys indicated their questions about their child's school had been answered, and four-fifths believed their child would seek out a school staff member in the event that a specific problem might arise.

Specific activities designed to introduce students to school activities and available academic or vocational specializations appeared to be successful. O.E.A. site visits indicated that these activities were relevant to students' and parents' concerns; analyses of responses to O.E.A.-constructed questionnaires indicated that the sessions provided a comprehensive overview of most school components. Slightly more than one-third of the students responding to the survey reported that the best aspect of the program was getting information about the school and diploma requirements, followed by seeing their new school (28 percent), meeting new classmates (14 percent), meals, games, and sports (seven percent), talking with student mentors

(six percent), and meeting school staff (four percent). The parts students reported liking the least were attending school before they had to (38 percent), the classes and the people they met (13 percent apiece), and confusing information (10 percent). However, 16 percent of students reported there was nothing they did not like about the S.L.P.

Student mentors had an important role in the program although that varied from school to school. If utilized carefully, their roles could potentially contribute to future programs by serving to provide a perspective with which incoming students can identify. Mentors, reflecting on their own experiences, also believed the program was very useful for new students and said they would have liked to have participated in a similar program when they entered high school.

Sessions on guidance services, extra-curricular activities, language arts, hands-on experiences, and general information dissemination all contributed to the program's overall goal of easing students' transition to high school. In light of the size of these schools, many of which have thousands of students, a program of this type is especially important because it lessens the chance that new students will get lost in an institution much larger than the small junior high or intermediate school they just left.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following specific recommendations are made:

- Continue the S.L.P. prior to the 1988-89 school year, especially those components that review graduation requirements, special school programs, and career awareness.

- Encourage schools to modify those aspects of the S.L.P. that proved difficult to implement and to expand on those that were successful.

- Consider limiting S.L.P. length to two or three days to minimize the degree to which the program resembles regular school activities. This could help keep attendance and interest levels high throughout the program.

- Offer at least one special evening orientation session at each school so working parents can participate in the program.

- Examine the responsibilities given to mentors in order to insure that they are used in the most effective way possible.

- Encourage schools to include a representative sample of teachers in the program. For example, teachers might be placed in classrooms where they could briefly explain the types of activities students are involved in during the school year.